AMERICAN FEDERATION OF LABOR
WEEKLY NEWS SERVICE

WHOLE NO. 1541 | WILLIAM GREEN, President | WASHINGTON, D. C., TUESDAY, MARCH 11, 1941 | GEORGE MEANY, Secretary-Treasurer | VOL. XI, NO. 10

FACING the FACTS
With PHILIP PEARL

Will Rogers would have a tough time if he were alive today. All he knew, he used to say, was what he read in the papers. Such sources of information are not what they used to be. If Will Rogers had to rely on them today for accurate information, he wouldn't know what he was talking about. And the millions of Americans who do have to rely on the newspapers for their information are being sadly misled and misinformed. We refer particularly to labor news.

If we are to believe the labor news published in the daily press, the entire national defense effort is being crippled by strikes. That is untrue. If we are to believe the newspapers, defense production has been seriously hampered and delayed by labor trouble. That is untrue.

What are the facts? President Roosevelt stated them succinctly at a recent press conference. He declared in a statement fully supported by statistics that work stoppages due to strikes have affected only one-fourth of one per cent of defense production.

There is absolutely no cause for public alarm about strikes, the President said. He denounced the newspapers for publishing highly "exaggerated" stories about labor troubles. Public fears are being needlessly aroused by these scare stories, he emphasized.

"Labor Speeds Defense"

We don't have to take the word of President Roosevelt alone, supported as it is by the records and facts, for this encouraging picture of the defense labor situation. Full corroboration comes from the National Defense Advisory Commission which has been entrusted with the task of directing all defense activities.

Under the title "Labor Speeds Defense," the Defense Commission has just published a booklet giving organized labor credit for having made "a remarkable record" of cooperation in the defense program. This booklet disclosed these facts:

"1—Work stoppages due to strikes in American industry during the year 1940 accounted for an average loss of less than two hours per year per worker.

"2—This figure is put in perspective when compared with the time lost through industrial accidents. On-the-job accidents accounted for an average idleness of more than one day per worker, or upward of four times that due to strikes. And the figure for accidents does not include the tremendous loss resulting from more than 11,000 deaths.

"3—There has been a 47 per cent decline in the number of man-days idle due to strikes during the first six months of the defense program over the corresponding period of 1939.

"4—The number of men involved in strikes was only about half as great during the first six months of the defense program as when the United States was actually at war twenty-four years ago. This is all the more significant when it is realized that total non-agricultural employment is 22 per cent larger today."

Enemies of Labor

We have quoted these statements because they are factual, because they come from an official Government source and because they expose the scare stories published in the newspapers as just plain silly.

Then why, it may well be asked, do the newspapers publish such stories? As we see it, there are three possible reasons. First is ignorance of the facts—and the extent of ignorance in most newspaper offices about labor is astounding. Second is the headline urge which prompts some editors to "blow up" insignificant stories far beyond their true news value just because of a lack of legitimately spectacular news.

But finally, and more sinister, is the third reason—and that is that certain newspaper publishers because of their economic predilections would like to see labor in the United States shackled by legislation. Newspapers under the control of these publishers have been responsible for the greater part of the scare stories we have seen in the press during the past few months.

Now we of the American Federation of Labor will match our patriotism—our unselfish patriotism—against that of any newspaper publisher. We are deeply concerned with the success of the national defense program. We are making sacrifices daily to assure uninterrupted industrial production. We do not want strikes. We are doing our utmost to avoid them. We have succeeded in avoiding them to a great extent. The records will show that although the A. F. of L. is the predominant labor organization, fewer than 10 per cent of defense strikes have originated in A. F. of L. unions.

We want these facts to be known and we ask you to help us inform the public of them because we are going to need all the support we can get to fight off anti-labor legislation in Congress sponsored by the perennial enemies of labor and widely promoted by the false propaganda appearing in the press.

Labor Standards on Public Works Must Be Safeguarded, Bates Says

Washington, D. C.—Harry C. Bates, chairman of the Housing Committee of the American Federation of Labor, told the House Committee [illegible] Buildings and Grounds that H. R. 3570 appears to assume that public works cease to be public works when they are undertaken in connection with national defense activities. Organized labor does not agree with this view, Mr. Bates declared emphatically.

"This bill proposes to repeal all standards and requirements Congress has developed and made applicable to federal-aided public works and substitutes for them such 'directions,' 'regulations,' 'terms and conditions' as may be prescribed by the President," the A. F. of L. spokesman testified.

"In other words, the bill proposes to scrap completely all standards previously developed through experience and embodied in statute as the supreme expression of inviolate public policy and to substitute for them new and unknown standards yet to be hastily thrown together and submitted to the President for quick promulgation by any of the large number of agencies which may take part in the program."

Mr. Bates, [illegible] Bricklayers, [illegible] International Union, said the A. F. of L. is "well aware of the urgency of the need for public works," to supplement defense activities, but asserted that H. R. 3570, as it now stands, would result in "a defective and wasteful program."

He urged that the bill be revised as follows:

1. Specific and unequivocal requirement for the maintenance of prevailing labor standards.
2. Administrative framework placing the responsibility for such public works program with the Federal Works Administrator, subject to the approval of the President.
3. A provision assuring standards of sound and permanent construction and of planning designed to achieve the maximum usefulness of each project to the community at the end of the emergency.
4. Provided these conditions are met, an increase in authorization to $300,000,000.

Western Union Employes Council Plans Big Meeting in Chicago

Chicago, Ill.—"Twenty thousand Western Union workers will be represented at the second conference of the joint Commercial Telegraphers Union and American Federation of Labor locals in Chicago beginning on March 24," President Frank B. Powers of the C.T.U. declared.

"Approximately 13,000 will be represented by delegates from Western Union System Division No. 2, Commercial Telegraphers' Union, with 53 locals, and 7,000 from nine federal unions directly affiliated with the American Federation of Labor," Mr. Powers said. "For organizational, legal and legislative activities, a National Western Union Council, taking in all AFL groups, was organized in Washington in November, 1940.

"CTU's Western Union System Division No. 2 will also hold a conference at the same time, adopting by-laws; electing division officers; discussing finances; negotiation of a "master agreement" and co-operation with the National Council.

"The meeting will be the largest gathering of Western Union employes since disestablishment of the company union in August, 1940.

"Of the 20,000 workers represented, 5,500 are in recognized CTU locals; another 5,000 in CTU locals having Labor Board elections pending, and 3,000 in AFL locals with elections pending. Among elections pending are Chicago (CTU), with 2,500 members out of 4,000 employes involved, and Philadelphia (AFL) with 800 out of 1,100 eligibles.

"Negotiations for agreements are going on in seven cities where CTU has been recognized. Wage increases totalling $500,000 annually have been granted, but more are expected as negotiations proceed."

Superintendents of Construction Needed for National Defense Work

Washington, D. C.—An examination has been announced by the United States Civil Service Commission to secure superintendents of general construction for work in the national defense program. Broad and responsible experience is required, and qualified persons are urged to file their applications at the Commission's Washington office where they will be rated as received until December 31, 1941.

There are several grades of positions with salaries ranging from $3,200 to $5,600 a year, less a 3½ per cent retirement deduction. In general, the duties involve the direction of foremen, laborers, and mechanics on large construction projects. Appointees will inspect materials and workmanship to see that they conform to specifications and will organize men and materials for efficient construction operations.

Competitors must have had progressive experience in the field of general construction. Part of this experience must have been as superintendent on large projects involving excavation, reinforced concrete, steel, wood, and masonry, and supervision of three or more foremen of different building or construction trades. Engineering courses completed at a college or technical institute may be substituted for part of the general experience.

Further information and application forms may be obtained from the Secretary of the Board of U. S. Civil Service Examiners at any first or second class post office, or from the U. S. Civil Service Commission, Washington, D. C.

Fahey Warns of "Jerry" Activities In Defense Construction Industry

James H. Fahey, chairman of the Federal Home Loan Bank Board, an avowed enemy of the "jerry builder," reports that this notorious practice of some contractors has been resumed quite generally. He pictured trouble for those who came his way.

Mr. Fahey's statement was a warning to builders and lenders to watch for bad building and to squash it whenever encountered in the interest of the building industry. The "jerry builder" appears generally where boom conditions prevail. His activities now center in areas where housing shortages are evident due to the demands of the preparedness program.

Chairman Fahey said home mortgage lending institutions had it in their power to prevent a real recurrence anywhere of shoddy construction of residential dwellings such as in 1922 to 1929, adding:

"The defense program has already brought about so great a demand for new houses that construction activity is approaching boom proportions. In boom times there is always a temptation for unscrupulous builders to use cheaper grades of material and workmanship. It is necessary, therefore, now more than ever before, to guard against the evils of jerry building.

"I sincerely hope mortgage lenders will not allow the building industry to make the same mistake again. The experience of the Home Owners' Loan Corporation with over a million home mortgages showed conclusively that the flimsy building of the Twenties was a large factor in the foreclosure wave of the Thirties. In the interest both of the home owner and of the lending institution, such construction must be eliminated."

WAGE INCREASE GAINED BY AFL RADIO OFFICERS

New York, N. Y.—The Radio Officers' Union, AFL affiliate, announced the signing of three 1941 collective bargaining agreements carrying a new provision to meet present exigencies. Wage increases up to 20 per cent were obtained, bringing about a newly-established wage scale for marine radio officers.

The agreement with the Waterman Steamship Corporation-Pan Atlantic Steamship Corporation and all of its affiliates establishes the wage scale of $150 per month for radio officers for freight ships as compared with the 1940 scale of $130. This raise in the base wage scale is also included in the agreement with the Commercial Molasses Corporation. The agreement with the Mississippi Shipping Co. of New Orleans brings the wage scales as much as 20 per cent higher, with the radio officers paid as follows: Passenger vessels, chief radio officer, $180 per month; first assistant, $150 per month; second assistant, $125 per month. Freight ships, $150 per month for the one radio officer.

These agreements set new base wages and eliminate the "temporary emergency" wage adjustments after the passing of the Neutrality Act. The closed shops have been retained and greater responsibility as regards communications permitted in all contracts. The agreements do not affect the war bonus rates which apply on the base rates.

UNION LABEL FLOUR NOW ON THE MARKET

I. M. Ornburn, secretary-treasurer, Union Label Trades Department of the American Federation of Labor, announced that the Ballard & Ballard Company of 912 East Broadway, Louisville, Ky., has obtained the right to display the A. F. of L. union label on Obelisk Flour.

"It is hoped that other mills will follow the example of Ballard & Ballard and enhance the possibility of enlarging the American Federation of Grain Processors Council," the Department said, adding:

Mr Ornburn has continually urged that housewives, especially among members of Women's Auxiliaries, demand the Union Label on all products. He is especially anxious to increase a quick demand for a new product upon which the Union Label is displayed. There is nothing that will encourage fair manufacturers more than to obtain increased sales immediately after they have signed a union label agreement."

NYA AIDS MANY HOSPITALS

Health and hospital attendants' projects of the National Youth Administration on which 15,250 young people were employed during the month of January are of material assistance to under-staffed hospitals and clinics in providing proper medical services, according to a report by NYA Administrator Aubrey Williams.

MINIMUM ANNUAL WAGE WON BY MEAT CUTTERS

Chicago, Ill.—One of the most unique agreements ever entered into with a meat packing establishment was recently consummated between the Lima, Ohio, Local Union No. 619 of the Amalgamated Meat Cutters and Butcher Workmen of North America, and the Lima Packing Company, Patrick E. Gorman, president of the Amalgamated, announced.

Every member of the union in the plant is guaranteed a yearly earning of not less than $1,437.60. The agreement stipulates that the company will provide four hours overtime work each week for all employes, with time and one-half rates provided for. The vacations with pay are allowed, and each employe will receive $26.40 pay for the vacation week provided for in the agreement.

The contract also contains a provision for the appointment of a fact-finding group that will quarterly during the life of the contract, check the increased cost of living. If this fact-finding group determines that the cost of living has increased 3 per cent, then the wages of all workers in the plant shall be automatically increased 3 per cent.

The usual union shop proviso as well as the no strike, no lock-out clause are also part of the contract.

HIGHER WAGES DEMANDED BY LADIES HAT MAKERS

New York, N. Y.—The Millinery Workers Union, AFL affiliate, mobilized its strength to secure higher wages and a 35-hour week for the employes of the millinery shop of Lilly Dache.

Union officials said the struggle was the opening move in a drive "to close the gap between the low wages paid to milliners who turn out hats for the wealthy and the relatively high wages of the milliners producing styles for the masses." They claimed that women workers on hats selling at wholesale for $12 a dozen receive a minimum wage of $30 for a 35-hour week, while Lilly Dache workers, turning out hats to sell for $35 apiece, get a wage ranging from $14 to $22 for 40 hours.

SUN LIFE CO. RENEWS INSURANCE AGENTS PACT

Washington, D. C.—The Sun Life Insurance Company of America, whose home office is in Baltimore, Md., has renewed its contract with the Industrial and Ordinary Insurance Agents Union No. 21354, AFL affiliate, covering members of the union employed by the company in Washington, D. C.

The new contract contains a number of improvements over the old one. With regard to the method previously used in paying special salary it provides that in any week in which an agent's lapse exceeds 50 cents, only 50 cents of such lapse will be charged against that week's issue and revival, the balance of such lapse to be held in abeyance and added to subsequent week's lapses. The preferential shop clause provides that all present members of the union must be made in good standing during the term of the contract and that all new employes must join the union after they have been employed fifteen weeks. An increase in commission for collecting debts in excess of $150 was also gained.

Thirty-two debit collectors and 15 canvassers in the Washington office of the company benefit by the agreement.

The negotiators for the union were Frank Weikel, Ralph U. Boyer and George L. Russ.

ALTMEYER SAYS DEFENSE MUST NOT INJURE LABOR

Arthur J. Altmeyer, chairman of the Federal Security Board, speaking at a joint conference of the New York Tuberculosis and Health Association and the Tuberculosis Sanatorium Conference of Metropolitan New York, denounced the argument that the national defense program would require curtailment of "newly won rights of labor."

He said that to curtail labor rights and abandon social insurance, public assistance and health service would be like trying "to find steel for the turrets of the ship of state by prying a few plates off the bottom."

News Briefs

CONGRESSMAN DIES URGES OUSTING OF NAZIS, REDS

Washington, D. C.—Representative Dies of Texas, chairman of the House Committee Investigating Un-American Activities, announced he would urge the ousting of all Communists and Nazis from defense industries, labor unions and Government service.

Dies, who earlier predicted a "sabotage blitz" in this country to result from passage of the lease-lend bill, said he felt the proposed action essential "to save the national defense program."

EDWARD J. PHELAN HEADS INTERNATIONAL LABOR UNIT

Washington, D. C.—Following the resignation of John G. Winant, recently appointed Ambassador to Great Britain, Edward J. Phelan became the Acting Director of the International Labor Office and will continue in this capacity until the appointment of a new director by the Governing Body, the Washington Office of the International Labor Office announced.

Mr. Phelan, who has been the Deputy Director of the International Labor Office since 1938, has been connected with the organization since its inception. He was a member of the British delegation to the Peace Conference in Paris in 1919. He collaborated in drafting the Constitution of the International Labor Organization and assisted Harold Butler in organizing the First International Labor Conference which was held in Washington, D. C., in 1919.

KICK-BACK CONTRACTOR FINED BY FRISCO JUDGE

San Francisco, Calif.—Found guilty of requiring his employes to "kick back" part of their wages in violation of the California Labor Code, Samuel Goldburg, a building contractor, was fined $100 by Judge Peter J. Mullins, H. C. Carrasco, State Labor Commissioner, announced.

Evidence produced at the trial revealed that Goldburg hired the men at union wages but told some of them that he was losing money on the job and would be unable to continue their employment unless they agreed to work for less. It was testified that some of the workers were induced to "kick back" as much as $10 a week.

22,000 FILM WORKERS RULED UNDER WAGE LAW

Los Angeles, Calif.—Wesley O. Ash, regional director of the Wage and Hour Division of the U. S. Department of Labor, ruled that more than 22,000 employes of the Hollywood motion picture industry are entitled to the minimum wage, maximum hours and other benefits of the Federal Fair Labor Standards Act.

The ruling followed an extended survey of the industry, involving 514 classifications of jobs. About 6,000 employes were held to be exempt from provisions of the law and the status of 2,242 is to be determined in hearings starting March 23.

Movie producers had contended the "shooting units" in studios were exempt from the law's application. The Labor Department held otherwise.

In the majority of the studios the workers will not be affected by the ruling, since producers have been following provisions of the act.

FEDERAL BOARD SETTLES RUTLAND RAIL DISPUTE

Rutland, Vt.—Fifteen organizations of railroad employes won a substantial part of their fight against arbitrary wage reductions imposed by the management of the Rutland Railroad. An agreement suggested by the special mediation board appointed by President Roosevelt on the eve of a threatened strike of 1,300 Rutland employes, included a pledge by the railroad to withdraw its order cutting wages by 10 to 30 per cent. Basic pay rates will be maintained except as they are increased for lower paid employes through future minimum wage rulings under the Federal Fair Labor Standards Act. In return the labor organizations which cooperated in the struggle consented to a voluntary deduction of 5 per cent for employes earning more than $15 a week.

Back wages, due the employes because of past reductions, will be paid if and when the railroad's revenue increases to a certain point. The management also agreed to consult with employes before making any substantial decreases in working forces.

U. S. COURT UPHOLDS VALIDITY OF POLL TAX

Cincinnati, Ohio.—The constitutionality of a poll tax levied by the State of Tennessee was upheld here in a decision by the sixth U. S. Circuit Court of Appeals.

"The right to vote is a political right, which the people of a state may appropriately condition through fundamental law or legislation," wrote Judge Xenophon Hicks. "The provisions requiring payment of the tax as a prerequisite to voting do not so much connote a levy as they do an effective method of collection."

AFL Will Fight CIO For Election At Lincoln Plant of Ford Motor Co.

Green Demands Poll of Employes to Determine Their Collective Bargaining Agency

Washington, D. C.—President William Green of the American Federation of Labor announced that the A. F. of L. will intervene in a hearing before the National Labor Relations Board to determine the collective bargaining agency for employes of the Lincoln plant of the Ford Motor Company, in Detroit, Mich. The hearing is on an application of the CIO for certification as the employes' sole bargaining agent.

In announcing the determination to challenge the CIO, President Green said:

"The American Federation of Labor has officially advised Acting Regional Director Harold A. Cranefield that it will intervene and participate in a hearing upon an application made by representatives of the C.I.O. for certification as the collective bargaining agency for the employes of the Lincoln Plant of the Ford Motor Company at Detroit, Michigan. This advice was sent Director Cranefield in reply to an official communication which he sent the American Federation of Labor on March 1st.

"We will welcome this opportunity to intervene and we sincerely hope that an election among the employes of the Ford Motor Company's Lincoln Plant will be held at a very early date. The American Federation of Labor will steadfastly maintain the right of the American Federation of Labor federal labor union established at the Lincoln Plant of the Ford Motor Company to represent said employes as their collective bargaining agency.

"We are of the opinion that an election as provided for in the National Labor Relations Act should be held at the Lincoln Plant of the Ford Motor Company so that the workers shall select in true democratic fashion their collective bargaining agency.

"Full instructions regarding procedure will be submitted to the representatives of the American Federation of Labor who have been acting for the American Federation of Labor in the organization of the employes of the Lincoln Plant of the Ford Motor Company.

"We are ready for an election at the Lincoln Plant of the Ford Motor Company at any time. We seek a determination of the issue raised by the representatives of the C.I.O. as quickly as possible We will abide by the decision of those participating in the election in conformity with provisions of the National Labor Relations Act"

SLUM CLEARANCE PLAN UPHELD BY U. S. COURT

Washington, D. C.—The constitutionality of the District of Columbia Alley Dwelling Authority was upheld by the United States Court of Appeals here when it ruled the Authority has power to condemn sites for low-cost housing projects in addition to providing homes for persons whose alley dwellings have been demolished. This is said to be the first time the statute has been upheld in the higher courts.

Declaring that slum clearance alone was not the test, the tribunal laid down the proposition that the law empowers the acquisition "not only of property in squares containing inhabited alleys, but also of other property necessary to provide accommodations for persons deprived of homes by the demolition of alley dwellings."

This was interpreted to mean that the A. D. A. can acquire sites in outlying districts, as it has done.

The decision, written by Chief Justice D. Lawrence Groner, asserted that the provisions of the National Housing Act declare the policy of the United States to be to promote the general welfare by employing Government money to remedy the acute shortage of decent, safe and sanitary dwellings for families of low income in rural and urban communities injurious to the health, safety and morals of the Nation.

Under the Alley Dwelling Act, said the court, there is no requirement that the property to be acquired must itself be unsafe or insanitary, or that it can only be acquired in connection with a project that includes the demolition of unsafe or insanitary dwellings.

THREE THOUSAND LINE UP FOR 1,000 HOSPITAL JOBS

The eagerness of workers for even low-wage jobs was strikingly revealed when 3,000 men and women stood in a line for many hours at the Fire Department College Building, Long Island City, N. Y., to submit applications for 1,000 hospital and laundry workers positions to be filled by the Municipal Civil Service Commission. The laundry jobs pay $15 a week, with some benefits under paid vacations, sick leave, etc. Other positions as hospital workers were listed as $360 a year for part time and $480 for full time including maintenance. Some of the applicants stood in line over 22 hours to file their applications.

I. C. C. Authority to Protect Rail Employes Upheld by Court

Washington, D. C.—A sweeping victory for the protection and compensation of railroad employes affected by the abandonment of railroad mileage was won here when a three-judge Federal court unanimously ruled that the Interstate Commerce Commission has been mistaken in holding that it has no authority to require such protection and compensation in abandonment cases.

This history-making and precedent-setting ruling was made by the court in setting aside that portion of a commission report which denied consideration of a petition by employes of Pacific Electric Railway, in California, for their own protection. The court directed the commission "to consider the petition and take such action as in the discretion of the commission is proper."

A majority, composed of Commissioners Mahaffie and Miller, declined to impose "conditions" for protection of the road's employes. Commissioner Porter dissented, saying the commission has power to impose such conditions, and should do so.

The Railway Labor Executives' Association asked the full commission to rehear the case, but the commission refused. Then the rail labor chieftains appealed to the court, asking it to direct the commission to hold hearings and reconsider the division's ruling.

The court so directed the commission, in a decision signed by Chief Justice D. L. Groner and Justice Fred M. Vinson, of the U. S. Appeals Court at Washington, and District Judge A. A. Wheat. Vinson, incidentally, is a former Democratic Congressman from Kentucky.

The victory for the railroad employes, however, goes far beyond the instructions to the I. C. C. in this particular case, because the three judges declared that Congress intended that employes who lose their jobs as a result of abandonments should be protected and compensated as are those affected by mergers and coordinations.

WAGES-HOURS COMMITTEES NAMED FOR 2 INDUSTRIES

Washington, D. C.—The Wage and Hour Division of the Department of Labor announced the appointment of two committees to fix minimum wage rates for employes in the clay products industry and the gray iron jobbing foundry industry.

The committees are made up of representatives of the public, management and labor, and may recommend the establishment by a wage order issued by Gen. Philip B. Fleming, Wage and Hour Administrator, of base pay rates between thirty and forty cents an hour.

The representatives for the employes in the clay products industry are General President Frank Kasten and General Secretary William Tracy of the United Brick and Clay Workers of America, A. F. of L. affiliate, and five other members of that union. On the foundry industry committee the representatives of the employes include President Harry Stevenson of the International Molders and Foundry Workers Union, A. F. of L. affiliate, and three vice presidents of that organization.

It is estimated that in the gray iron jobbing foundry industry about 8 per cent of the 150,000 to 200,000 employes are now getting less than 40 cents an hour and that in the clay products industry approximately 10,000 of the 45,000 workers receive wages below the 40 cents rate.

HIGHER EARNINGS URGED FOR LOW-INCOME GROUPS

"The unsatisfied wants of millions of our citizens offer a challenge and an opportunity to increase domestic distribution of agricultural products," declares Milo Perkins, Administrator of the Surplus Marketing Administration of the Department of Agriculture, in his recent annual report.

"Families who are forced to live at the 5-cents-a-meal level cannot buy the amounts or kinds of food they need," he said.

"They do not get enough of fruits and vegetables, of dairy and poultry products, or of meats. Neither can they buy adequate supplies of clothing and household goods. Studies show that families of four with incomes of $500 a year or less spend only $17 a year for cotton goods, as against expenditures of $111 a year for families of four making $5,000 a year or over.

"If all families earning less than $100 a month could bring their incomes up to that level, the national expenditure for food alone would increase by approximately 2 billion dollars a year, about half of which would go back to the farmer, thus raising the price level for his entire production. In the same way, low-income families would increase their cotton purchases materially if they had more buying power. In one way or another this untapped market must be reached."